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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BUCHAREST 000598

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

EUR/CE FOR ASCHEIBE; DRL FOR DNADEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM RO](#)

SUBJECT: ROMANIANS SAY "MADONNA DON'T PREACH"

REF: A. BUCHAREST 243

[1](#)B. 2008 ROMANIA HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

[1](#)1. (U) Many in the crowd of 70,000 booed Madonna at her August 26 concert in Bucharest after she unexpectedly paused between songs to call on Romanians to "stop discriminating against the Romany" (sic). The crowd had cheered Roma musicians and dancers when they joined Madonna onstage. The catcalls began when the singer announced she was saddened by the anti-Roma sentiment in Eastern Europe and continued when she called for equal treatment for homosexuals and other groups.

[1](#)2. (U) According to an Embassy officer who attended, the booing was vociferous and widespread. Crowd demographics weighted toward Romanians in their twenties and thirties but included all generations. Perhaps somewhat heartening was the fact that in some YouTube clips one could hear scattered cheers mixed in with the more predominant boos. Media reactions were mixed. One Roma leader was quoted as calling the audience response "worrying and primitive," but more common in the press were Romanians' criticisms of Madonna for sticking her nose where, they felt, it didn't belong.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Comment. The singer's preachy, even hectoring tone (as seen on Youtube) undoubtedly irritated Romanians, who tend not to like lectures about discrimination - or anything else for that matter - from outsiders. The crowd reactions reflected Romanian ambivalence toward the Roma: embraced as musicians and performers, yet otherwise distrusted at best and discriminated against at worst. While Madonna's comments may not lead to much-needed national reflection about issues of prejudice, they were at least a useful reminder for Romanians of how many Westerners perceive them. End Comment.
GITENSTEIN